

NORTHBROOK, IL – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk and Northbrook Village President Gene Marks presented the keys of a fully refurbished ambulance to officials from Tonatico, Mexico, at a press conference held at Northbrook Fire Station 11 on Friday, December 28.

"When President Marks mentioned that the village was upgrading its ambulance, I immediately thought of Tonatico, Mexico," Congressman Kirk said. "Tonatico is a very poor community located southwest of Mexico City, and many 10th District citizens come from that village. Because of the generosity of Northbrook, thousands of people will receive quicker medical care. We are very grateful to the Northbrook Village Board as well as the Northbrook Fire Department. Their ambulance makes a wonderful Christmas gift for the people of Tonatico."

"We upgraded our ambulance as part of our normal equipment replacement cycle," Village President Marks said. "Due to the excellent condition of the old vehicle, we hoped to find a good use for it. With Congressman Kirk's help, we found a new home for the ambulance where it will continue to save lives. We are particularly honored that our friends from Tonatico could join us to celebrate this partnership."

After the Northbrook Fire Department purchased an upgraded ambulance to serve the community, the village was left with an older, but completely operational vehicle. In conversations with Village President Marks, Congressman Kirk recommended donating the ambulance to Tonatico, an impoverished village of 10,000 people southwest of Mexico City. Most Latino 10th District citizens come from only three communities in Mexico: Tonatico, La Luz and San Jose.

Congressman Kirk put Northbrook in contact with the Tonatico Social Club of North Chicago. Local Latino leaders and Congressman Kirk then worked with officials in Mexico to finalize the ambulance donation.

The ambulance is scheduled to be delivered in Mexico early next year. Members of Congressman Kirk's Latino Advisory Board will drive the vehicle more than 2,000 miles from Northbrook to Tonatico.

Kirk and Marks presented the keys to Josefina Rubi Garcia, the wife of the Tonatico mayor. She was joined by residents of Tonatico and family members of 10th District citizens. The visiting families are part of Congressman Kirk's "Abuelitas" program where groups of grandparents from Mexico receive limited visas to visit relatives in northern Illinois, many of whom have not seen each other in more than 10 years. Due to extreme poverty, the grandparents would be unable to visit their family members in the U.S. without the Abuelitas program. To date, more than 10 groups have come to the United States and returned to Mexico.